



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: July 19, 2004 (04-52)

Contact: Tom Wessels (360) 902-1984

Jeff Smith (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Visit our Web site at: agr.wa.gov

WSDA to hold public hearing on proposed vine mealybug quarantine

OLYMPIA –The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is considering a quarantine rule to prevent the spread of the vine mealybug, a pest that could create significant economic damage to the state's burgeoning grape industry.

"The risk of entry for this pest is particularly urgent," said Tom Wessels, WSDA's Plant Services program manager. "The pest could have a major impact on the productivity of the grape industry."

The insect damages grapes and their vines by attacking the fruit and vines. It can transmit grape viruses as well. Introduction of this pest into the state of Washington could come through infested grapevines, rootstock and plant cuttings or on contaminated grape cultivation or harvesting equipment.

Wessels said the vine mealybug reproduces rapidly and feeds on all parts of the grapevine throughout the year.

WSDA proposes adding the vine mealybug to an existing quarantine order already in place to halt the spread of grape phylloxera. This comes at the request of the Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers.

A public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for 1 p.m. on July 27, at the WSDA office, 21 North First Avenue, Yakima.

Currently the grape phylloxera quarantine rule requires that any grapevines, grape rootstock or softwood cuttings from outside the state must be accompanied by a certificate issued by the plant protection organization in the state or country of origin. The rule also includes requirements for shipment notification and equipment cleaning.

Written testimony on the proposal can be sent electronically, by mail or by fax to Henri Gonzales, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504, FAX: (360) 902-2094 or e-mail: hgonzales@agr.wa.gov. Written testimony must be received by July 27. The tentative adoption date of the proposed rule is Aug. 10.

For questions, contact Tom Wessels, manager of WSDA Plant Services Program at (360) 902-1984 or by e-mail at twessels@agr.wa.gov. For information on WSDA's rule-making process go to the WSDA Web site, <http://agr.wa.gov/PlantsInsects/Rulemaking/Rulemaking.htm>.

###